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LASHBACK

erving the Past for the Future

Volume 50 August 2000 Number 3

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WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Washington County Historical Society

118 East Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701

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Membership is invited of those interested in the preservation of Washington County's history. Dues are $15/$25 annually. Donations, tax deductible according to current law, are gratefully received any time for special projects. Members are mailed *Flashback* every quarter. Past issues cost $5 each, current year's issues, $4 each.

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Cover photo: This band is assembled outside the last building of the first Baptist Church in Washington County. It was organized in 1830 and was in several locations over the years. They built this log structure in 1870 close to where the Baptist Ford Community Church is now located, but dissolved about 1900. Photo made in 1913. See story beginning on page two. *Photograph courtesy Washington County Historical Society photo files in Shiloh Museum of Ozark History History/B. F. Grabill, photographer.*

FLASHBACK

Preserving the Past for the Future

Volume 50 **August 2000** **Number 3**

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FLASHBACK is published and mailed four times a year—the first week in February, May, August, and November. Articles for *Flashback* should be submitted 60 days before the publishing date of each issue. Acceptable articles will be published in the next available issue, provided there is space.

COPY to be printed in *Flashback* may be submitted in one of several ways: 1) furnished on computer disc, preferrably in WordPerfect or Microsoft Word for either Macintosh or a PC, 2) by e-mail to the editor at <dschaefe@comp.uark.edu> or, 3) cleanly typed copy that can be optically scanned. Text copy, photos, and artwork are all assembled on a computer. We welcome letters or e-mail messages that tell us of planned articles or that inquire about the Society activities.

The First Baptist Church Organized in Washington County

AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CULTURE OF THE COUNTY

by Lloyd O. Warren

[Adapted from a presentation at Shiloh Museum, Springdale, Arkansas, January 20, 2000.]

The history of a church is an essential part of the history of the area in which it is located. It will reflect the ethnology of the immigrants and their influence on the development of the new territory. Thus a review of events that led to the establishment of Washington County and subsequently the organization of churches to serve the spiritual needs of the immigrants, provides some insight into the cultural patterns brought in by the immigrants.

Following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the Territory of Arkansas was not established until 1819. The territory included almost all of the present states of Oklahoma and Arkansas. Defining the boundaries of Indian lands within the new territory involved complicated legal actions in which Indian tribes ceded lands to the Federal government. The Osage had ranged over an area that embraced parts of the present day states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. The Osage ceded land by treaty in 1808, 1818, and 1825. These cessions removed them from the northwest corner of the Territory of Arkansas. In the meantime the Cherokees, being forced to move westward from southeastern states were assigned land taken from the Osage. The first Cherokee line, established in 1817, ran north from the mouth of Plum Bayou on the Arkansas River to the White River near Batesville. Because of the continuing

encroachment of non-native people, the line was moved westward in 1823 to a point on the Arkansas River near Fort Smith and extending northeastward to a point on the White River at its junction with the Arkansas-Missouri border. This line was contested bitterly and treaties with the Choctaws in 1825 and with the Cherokees in 1828 resulted in fixing the western boundary of the state as it exists in 2000. The Treaty of 1828 opened up the northwest section of Arkansas to settlement and recognized the rights of those who had entered the area earlier.

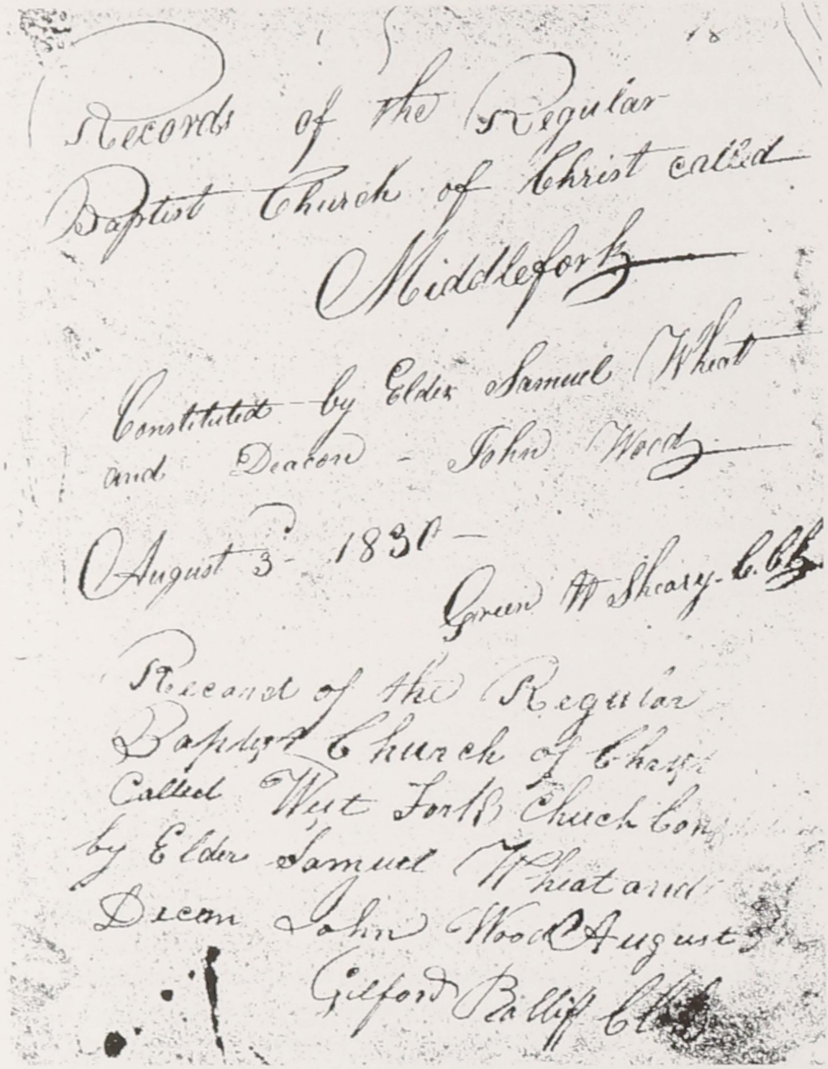
Many settlers had previously moved into the area even though they were in an illegal status. In some instances the army had moved or attempted to move the trespassers out of the disputed lands but it was not always successful. The first group of settlers to arrive in the county, other than transient trappers and explorers, came in 1826. Six families settled illegally in the Cane Hill area and were challenged by the army. The illegal immigrants persevered and the settlement was legalized by the Treaty of 1828. They were soon followed by other immigrants that came principally from the states of Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee. Often these immigrants, individually and collectively, carried documents certifying their church affiliation at their previous location.

In Washington County, the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists were the ranking faiths represented by the immigrants. According to some, the Cumberland Presbyterian circuit riders were the first Protestant clergymen to work in Arkansas. In the new community of Cane Hill, Reverend John Buchanan led in the organization of a church at Cane Hill and in 1830 he assisted in the establishment of a church at Fayetteville. This church was organized in a blacksmith shop owned by John Lewis. The first Baptist church in the county was organized August 3, 1830. At Mount Comfort, the first

Presbytery was organized August 30, 1830. The Baptists soon had other churches established at War Eagle, Wedington, and Little Flock. The Methodists arrived in Fayetteville in 1832, the Episcopalian and Christian churches in 1848.

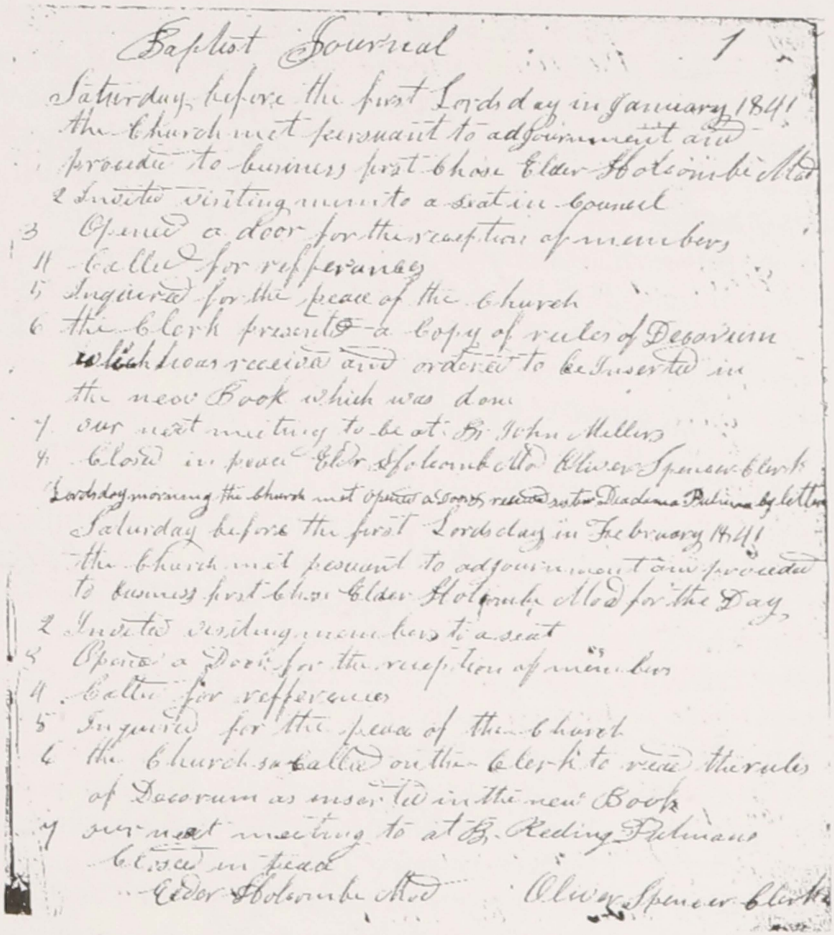
While researching Baptist History for Washington County, a brief reference to a "White River church in Washington County" was found which indicated the existence of a Baptist church in 1830. This date was about a year earlier than any other known for a Baptist church in the county. Documentary evidence was searched for without success for a number of years. Amazingly, to the delight of this author and to descendants of former members of this church and through a series of fortuitous events, the minutes of the first Baptist church in Washington County were recovered.

The first major event that led to recovery of the minutes was a story by Kay Hall, news writer for *The Springdale Morning News*. She had an interview with Omar Ingram, a retired Springdale businessman who was in possession of a minute book of the first church of the Baptist faith organized in Washington County. Ingram was a scion of an early pioneer family in Washington County and a descendant of William Ingram, a pastor of the church. For more than 60 years the minute book was held by family members living in Oregon and California. In 1984 the book was returned to Omar Ingram who generously allowed the author to copy the minute book for study and to copy it for deposit in appropriate repositories. This book, labeled Book 1 was transcribed in 1888 by Evans Atwood, a member of Shiloh Church, from the original record books which were becoming fragile and worn from age. The Ingram copy includes books one, two, and three of the original church documents and covers the period from 1830 to 1849. The copy is very well done and easily read.



This is a copy of fly leaf of one of the minute books of the church. Note the original name as Middlefork and the addendum giving the name as "Regular Baptist Church of Christ called West Fork." *Courtesy of Bob Besom/Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.*

In 1998, Dorothy Cowan Robinson, in a letter accompanying a copy of Volume II, that was transcribed largely by Atwood covering the period 1849 to 1896, had these


Baptist Journal 1
Saturday before the first Lords day in January 1841
the Church met persuant to adjournment and
proceede to business first chose Elder Holcomb Mod
2 Invited visiting members to a seat in Council
3 Opened a door for the reception of members
4 Called for references
5 Inquired for the peace of the Church
6 the Clerk presented a copy of rules of Decorum
which was received and ordered to be Inserted in
the new Book which was done
7 our next meeting to be at Br. John Millers
4 Closed in prayer Elder Holcomb Mod Oliver Spencer Clerk
Lordsday morning the church met opened a door received into Membership Sister Dadema Pullins by letter
Saturday before the first Lordsday in February 1841
the Church met persuant to adjournment & proceeded
to business first chose Elder Holcomb Mod for the Day
2 Invited visiting members to a seat
3 Opened a Door for the reception of members
4 Called for references
5 Inquired for the peace of the Church
6 the Church was called on the Clerk to read the rules
of Decorum as inserted in the new Book
7 our next meeting to at Br. Reding Pullins
Closed in prayer
Elder Holcomb Mod Oliver Spencer Clerk

Copy of the Journal for the regular church meeting in January 1841. Note the format was formal and was followed consistently in business meetings. The penmanship is exceptional. The moderator for this session was the noted John Holcombe with Oliver Spencer acting as church clerk.

comments:

"Volume II had been in my family as far back as I can remember. My father, Laster David Cowan, was born [1895] and reared on the north slope of White Oak Mountain southeast of Greenland [known as Staunton in the 1890s]. He believed it to be a record of the activities

and worship of the congregation that was the forerunner of the present Baptist Ford Community Church and Cemetery.

Volume I was known to be in the possession of Earl and Elise Evans [another pioneer family of the community] who carried it with them to Oregon in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Since the Evans had no children, I would be pleased to learn how volume I made its way back home."

In the late 1980s, Bob and Pat Besom were "bequeathed" copies of minutes that overlap the periods covered by the Atwood transcriptions extending the record of the church to 1884. It appears that some of the records in the "Besom" copies are original minutes as the penmanship of the different entries is not uniform as one would expect if the records had been copied by a single individual.

With the appearance of the Besom and Robinson volumes, the history of the church was recorded to May, 1896, when the last record of a church meeting was made in the minute book. The minutes of the 1885 annual session of the Washington Association of Regular Baptists show that the "first" church was represented and reported a membership of 32. Ten years later, at the 58th annual session of the Association held at the Goshen Church, October 5-7, 1895, a membership of 12 was reported by the West Fork Church, the 1906 associational minute book does not list the church as being represented. It is assumed that the church ceased to exist around the turn of the century.

The initial organizational meeting of the church was held on the middle fork of the White River above the site of the Black Oak community. The following is a copy of the minutes of that meeting

"Arkansas Territory, Washington County, August 3, 1830.

This will certify to whom it may concern, the undersigned met on the middle fork of White River and agreed to

become a constituted church, and being examined by the Presbytery, and being thought to be orderly, was constituted by elders Samuel Wheat and Deacon John Wood on the general principles of the regular Baptist order.

Elder Samuel Wheat
Deacon John Wood.

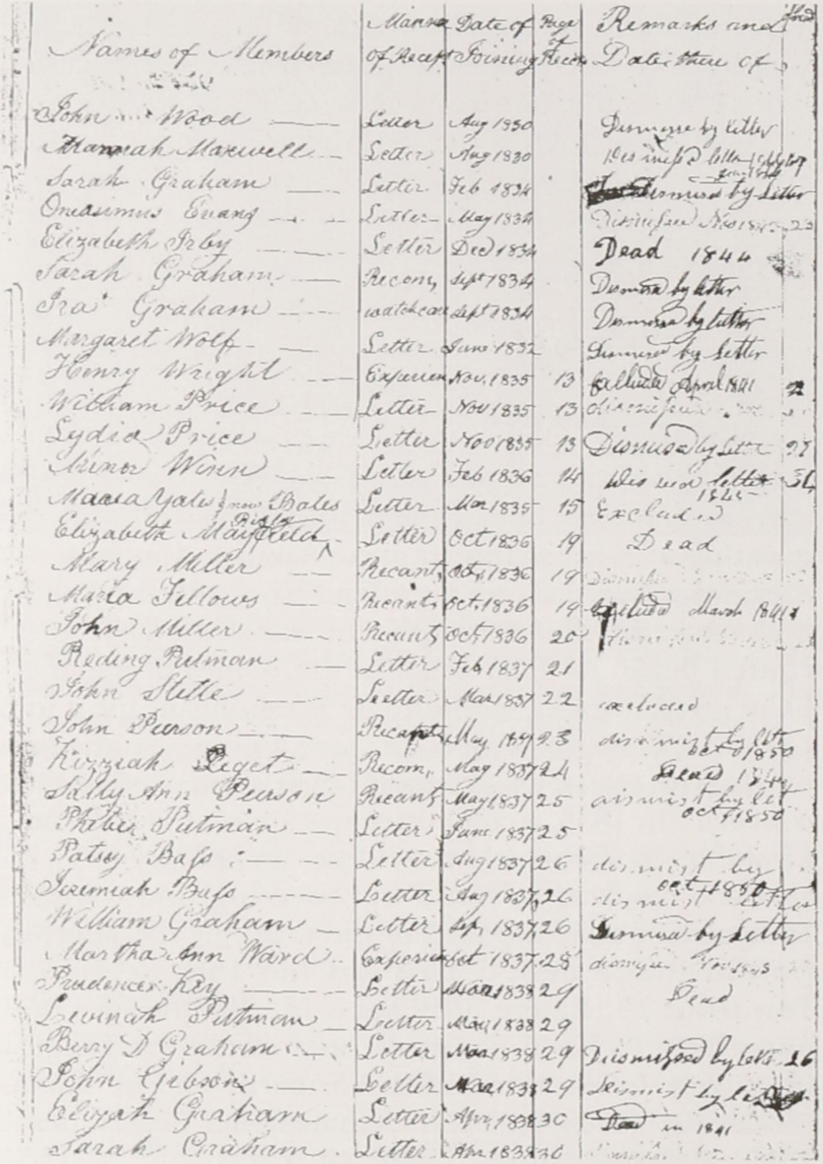
The constituents:

John Wood
Eli Bloyd
Samuel Wheat
Isham Wood
Margaret Wood
Hannah Maxwell
Mary Bloyd"

From this very humble beginning with a membership of seven in 1830, the church roll shows a list of 306 names by August, 1889, the date of the last entry. [The roll has not been reconciled to discover duplicate entries of which there are many.] The church, in 1837, adopted the "Abstract of Faith of the Spoon River Association of Regular Baptists of Illinois." This action indicated that some of the members who joined the church were from Illinois and carried their principles of faith with them. As was typical of the time, the church held services once a month. These services were frequently held at the home of a member. In the early years the church often met at the home of Deacon John Wood who owned land near Sulphur City. The church also met at the home of David Stanley on Richland Creek.

A Change in Name

Soon after this church was organized in 1830, it declared itself to be "The United Baptist Church of Christ at Middle Fork." At this time a controversy was disturbing the fellowship of the United Baptists tending to divide the congregations along different interpretations of biblical practices. As a result, the church in 1834, resolved to drop the term "United" from its name



Names of Members	Manner of Recept.	Date of Joining	Page of Rec.	Remarks and Date Date of
John [illegible] Wood	Letter	Aug 1830		Dismissed by Letter
Hannah Maxwell	Letter	Aug 1830		Dismissed by Letter
Sarah Graham	Letter	Feb 1834		Dismissed by Letter
Onesimus Evans	Letter	May 1834		Dismissed Nov 1842 23
Elizabeth Irby	Letter	Dec 1834		Dead 1844
Sarah Graham	Recons	Sept 1834		Dismissed by Letter
Ira Graham	Letter	Sept 1834		Dismissed by Letter
Margaret Wolf	Letter	June 1832		Dismissed by Letter
Henry Wright	Experience	Nov 1835	13	Excluded April 1841 22
William Price	Letter	Nov 1835	13	Dismissed
Lydia Price	Letter	Nov 1835	13	Dismissed by Letter 23
Elinor Winn	Letter	Feb 1836	14	Dismissed by Letter 1846 34
Maasa Yates [illegible] Bates	Letter	Mar 1835	15	Excluded
Elizabeth Mayfield Bird	Letter	Oct 1836	19	Dead
Mary Miller	Recant	Oct 1836	19	Dismissed
Maria Fellows	Recant	Oct 1836	19	Excluded March 1841
John Miller	Recant	Oct 1836	20	Dismissed
Reding Putman	Letter	Feb 1837	21	
John Stutts	Letter	Mar 1837	22	Excluded
John Pearson	Recant	May 1837	23	dismissed by Letter Dec 1850
Kizziah Leget	Recom.	May 1837	24	Dead 1844
Sally Ann Pearson	Recant	May 1837	25	dismissed by Letter Oct 1850
Peter Putman	Letter	June 1837	25	
Patsy Bass	Letter	Aug 1837	26	dismissed by Oct 1850
Jeremiah Bass	Letter	Aug 1837	26	dismissed by Oct 1850
William Graham	Letter	Sept 1837	26	Dismissed by Letter
Martha Ann Ward	Experience	Oct 1837	28	dismissed
Prudence Ray	Letter	March 1838	29	Dead
Levinah Putman	Letter	May 1838	29	
Berry D Graham	Letter	May 1838	29	Dismissed by Letter 26
John Gibson	Letter	May 1838	29	dismissed by Letter
Elizath Graham	Letter	April 1838	30	Dead in 1841
Sarah Graham	Letter	April 1838	30	[illegible]

A copy of one page from the church roll. Note detail of information recorded such as manner of reception, date of reception, page of minute book where first recorded, and lastly manner of dismissal. There were three ways of terminating membership—death, transfer by letter to another church of like order, or by exclusion due to behavior not in keeping with the church's rules or beliefs.

and be called only "The Regular Baptist Church of Christ." The membership pattern apparently shifted more toward the West Fork of White River thus in 1836, the name was changed to the "United Baptist Church of West Fork" [not after the town, but after the stream]. There was inconsistent usage of this term so in June 1845, the church adopted the name "Regular Baptist Church on West Fork." This name was used during the rest of its existence.

Looking for a Church Home

Growing in numbers the church took action in November 1833 to "meet in a house of worship" rather than at a private home. The church agreed to "meet monthly at a schoolhouse near Samuel Alexander's." Alexander was the owner of land where Drake Field is now located. This arrangement was short-lived as the church began to meet again in the homes of members. [The reference to a schoolhouse is significant for it indicates that the early settlers did have an interest in education]. The matter of a church home continued to be of concern. In 1835, a committee was appointed to locate a favorable site for the church house. In January 1836, the church "resolved to build our meeting house on the 16th section near the ford of the creek by the approbation of Judge Bell." This was the 16th Section in Township 15, Range 30W set aside for public good. According to Land Grant records in the Washington County Archives, "this section was partly sold by Samuel Alexander, Township Land Commissioner September 1, 1845, and subsequently part of it was sold by Thad Wilson, Land Commissioner, Sept. 18th, 1852." According to an article by Robert Winn, records show that part of Section 16 was sold to Jonah D. Carlisle in 1861. In 1946 Dr. G. W. Wilson acquired four acres from a descendant of Carlisle and deeded it to the Baptist

This was the final home of the first Baptist Church organized in Washington County in 1830. This was the third building erected by the church during its history, the second one at this site. It was erected about 1870 near Greenland at a ford across the West Fork of the White River—thus the identity of the location as Baptist Ford. The photo was made in 1913 some time after the demise of the church. A community church now occupies the site. ***Photo courtesy of Michell Crider/Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/ Grabill Photo, photographer.***

Ford Cemetery Association. Thus it appears that the Regular Baptist Church on West Fork did not have recorded ownership of the land that the church house occupied in Section 16. The cemetery's oldest known date of use is 1846.

Even though the church had been given access to a home site in 1836, construction of a building was slow and the first service held in the new building as recorded in the minutes was held in March 1839. Completion of the building was slow. Planking for the floor was authorized in April 1841 but not until June 1842 was the job completed. Strangely, the church voted in April 1843 to explore different sites for a church home. The church accepted a gift of 1 2/3 acres of land from John Miller on which a

new house was built, occupied in 1845, and used until the Civil War interrupted activities. This meeting house was located not far from the present location of Dennis Home Furnishing Store near the airport. Following the end of the Civil War, the church resumed activity and built a new church house about 1870 at the Baptist Ford site. This was the church home until the church went out of existence around the turn of the century.

The Cultural Impact of the Church on the Community

The linkage between this church and the developing culture and economy of Washington County was significant. To illustrate this, a brief resume of a few families associated with the church.

Onesimus Evans — joined the church in May 1834, and served the church many times as moderator and as a delegate to Associational meetings. He was a president of the Fayetteville branch of the Arkansas State Bank. He was lettered out in October, 1845.

John and Dolly Holcombe — were received as members by letter from an unnamed church. He was likely a licensed minister and quickly endeared himself to the congregation, serving as moderator and demonstrating qualities of leadership that were to characterize him the rest of his life. In June 1840 he was ordained to the ministry and served as pastor of the church several times. Much has been written about him and tradition regards him as the founder of Springdale. He participated in the organization of the Shiloh Regular Baptist Church August 22, 1840 and in February 1844, he and Dolly joined the church at Shiloh.

Peter Mankins — settled in the Middle Fork valley about 1832. For a while the locale was known as "Mankin Town" but later was named Sulphur City as it is known today. Peter Mankin's claim to fame was his longevity, being 111 years of age when he died

December 30, 1881. He joined the church in April 1844. He served churches of his faith as Deacon for 65 years.

Peter Van Winkle — a Dutchman by descent, was born 1814 in New York City, came to Washington County in 1839. He married Temperance Miller, daughter of John and Mary Miller, members of the West Fork Baptist Church of Christ. In April 1843, Peter and Temperance became members of the church. Following the construction of the new building in 1845, Peter was instructed to supervise the installation of locks and bolts on the doors and windows. In 1849 he served as clerk of the church. In 1850 Peter and Temperance moved to Benton County and they were dismissed from the church in October 1850. On his death in 1882 he was eulogized as a faithful member of the Primitive Baptist Church. He is well remembered as the supplier of materials for the construction of Old Main at the University of Arkansas. Shortly before his death he built the Van Winkle Hotel at Fayetteville, said to have the been the largest frame structure in the State at that time.

The Graham Family — The family name appears first in 1834, when Lucinda, Ira, and Sarah joined the church. William joined in 1837, Berry and Elijah in 1838. Ten or more of this clan were members of the church during the first 19 years of record. With the constitution of the Shiloh Church at Springdale at least eight of the Graham clan moved their membership to the new church at Springdale. While at the West Fork Church Berry served the church in various capacities. He was ordained a deacon in 1838 and in 1839 he was licensed to preach but there is no record that he was ever formally ordained as a minister.

John and Sarah Peerson — were added to the fellowship of the church in May and June of 1837, John by letter and Sarah by restoration as she had previously held membership at the church. John Peerson served the

church as clerk and as a delegate to Associational meetings from time to time. Church meetings were often held at the home of the Peersons. In 1860 John and Sarah moved their membership to Shiloh where he was elected church clerk in 1862. The land on which the Springdale Golf Course is located once belonged to the Peerson family.

John and Mary Miller — joined the church in 1833 and were faithful members of the church for many years. John was ordained a deacon in January of 1843. In 1845 he and Mary donated the land for the new church building. John and Mary transferred their church membership to Shiloh Church September, 1868, where he was received as a deacon.

From what was outlined above it is evident that the Church on West Fork provided leadership in the organization of the church at Shiloh and that there was strong interaction for many years with the West Fork church. Shiloh was not the only congregation to obtain help from West Fork Church. The church aided in the organization of the Regular Baptist Church of Christ near Wedington in 1832. This church existed in the 1970s before ceasing to meet regularly. The West Fork [Middle Fork] Church assisted in the organization of a church at War Eagle, February 1832. Evidently the number of settlers in the Middle Fork valley had increased to a level that they desired to again have a church in that community. A number of members of the West Fork Church withdrew to organize a new church in September 1846. This church evidently ceased meeting during the Civil War for in July 1868, a new congregation was organized on Middle Fork.

Associational Relationships

Churches of the regular or primitive Baptist persuasion organized associations but these did not exercise

authority over the affairs of the local church. These associations customarily met once a year for fellowship, consultation, and reporting on the condition of the respective churches. The West Fork [Middle Fork] Church voted in August 1831 to send a letter to an Associational meeting which met in Izard County October 1831. The association is not named in the church record but the report of the Spring River Association Meeting lists the West Fork Church as a corresponding member. In September 1832, the church petitioned for release from its ties with the Spring River Association to associate with local churches in a new association organized in May 1833 at the home of John Titsworth near Richland, Madison County. This was the beginning of the Washington Association of Regular Baptists, which continues today under slightly different terminology.

Pastoral Leadership of the Church

Identifying the pastor of the church at West Fork Church is difficult at times as the church, in its regular monthly meetings, would elect a moderator from the ordained ministry present, either a visiting minister or from the membership of the church. From the record book a partial list follows:

Samuel Wheat — 1830, the organizing minister. Little is known of Wheat or his background. He evidently worked as an evangelist as his name is associated with the establishment of other churches in the area.

Young Lamar — Young Lamar and his wife, Elizabeth, joined the church in November 1830, and were dismissed by letter in March 1832.

James Mayfield — 1837-1838. James Mayfield was a teacher as well as a minister. He was one of the charter members of the new church organized at Sulphur City in 1846. He later joined and was a member and pastor of

the Mount Zion Baptist Church that was located between Black Oak and Sulphur City. In 1854 he donated land for a church and school in a community called Macedonia in the northeastern sector of Washington County. The Postal Service disproved the name as there was already a community by that name in Arkansas. Thus the citizens of the area honored Mayfield by naming the community after him. He was killed by bushwhackers in June, 1865. He had served as minister and teacher to many people prior to his untimely death.

John Holcombe — 1840. Holcombe served this church for many years as a member and a minister. He ministered to the church often even though his membership was at Shiloh. As noted elsewhere, this church ordained him to the ministry.

William Ingram — was ordained as a minister by the West Fork Church in December of 1852 and served the church as pastor at various times until his death on October 30, 1898. He joined the West Fork Church by letter in February 1834 but was excluded in May 1838 due to drunkenness. He was reinstated in 1840 then dismissed by letter in 1845. He was licensed to be a minister at an Associational meeting held at the Lee's Creek Church in 1848. He moved his membership back to West Fork in 1852 where he remained a member until his death in 1898.

Other ministers that served the church were Daniel Howery, T. M. Brinson, and J. D. Loving. Deacons that were ordained by the Church were Eli Bloyd, Berry D. Graham, John Miller, Joel Dyer, John Peerson, Stephen Peerson, and D. Chapman.

Deacons that were received as members from other churches were John Wood, A. J. Williford, Edward Brown, and Taurus Reiff.

The above named individuals are listed from the record book of the church transcribed by Evans Atwood

in 1888 and labeled Volume II. Additions were made by others serving as clerk to the last entry that was made in May 1896.

Ministers of the Baptist faith experienced much hardship in carrying the gospel to the frontier settlements. B. B. Smith, an Episcopal Bishop in an address in 1863 characterized their work in an eloquent manner:

> *"Many of these Baptist dogmas rung like a tocsin in the ears of the poor white people ... no stately altars, no dignified vestments, no costly sacramental vases, no pompous dignitaries, no far fetched ministerial commission, no sober forms of prayer for them. Their sons and brothers, in everyday attire, often in their shirt sleeves, and with their own homespun modes of speech, rich in the embroidering of inspired sentences, and eloquent with all the ardor of impassioned speech, preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, and labored for them freely as their servants in the Gospel for Jesus' sake. Add to this, the stem enthusiasm of their Calvinist creed, the fond allurements of a Republican form of government, and the prestige of an imposing primitive rite, administered in a mode plainly consonant with the scripture, and who can wonder that they carried all before them.*

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1. Carter, Deane C. 1968. *Methodists in Fayetteville.* Special Pub. Washington County Historical Society, Fayetteville, Ark.

2. Minutes, Regular Baptist Church on Westfork, 1830-1896. On file- Special Collections, Univ. of Arkansas Library Fayetteville and Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Ark.

3. Neal, Joseph C. 1989. *Pioneer Trails to Washington County in Washington County History,* Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Ark. Chapter 3, pp. 79-87.

4. Reynolds, John Hugh. 1908. *The Western Boundary of Arkansas.* In Arkansas Historical Association Publications, V 2, pp. 211-236. ❖

A Glimpse of Early Tontitown

[The existence of the article below first became known to the editor when a story which excerpted portions of this article by Roselli was submitted to *Flashback* earlier this year by Kathy Warnes of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. In an effort to identify the article's author and the its exact location in *The Century Magazine*, I found that this particular article about Tontitown was not included or quoted from in previous publications of the Washington County Historical Society. The article is taken from pages 377-386 of Vol. 99, No. 3 of the January 1920 issue of *The Century Magazine*. The history of Tontitown was very well covered in *The Story of Tontitown, Arkansas*, compiled and edited by W. J. Lemke, Washington County Historical Society Bulletin Series, August, 1963. The following article by Roselli, a native of Italy, should be a nice supplement to the 1963 publication.]

An Arkansas Epic

by Bruno Roselli

The dramatic story of Tontitown, a medieval Italian city, located in Arkansas, and all that remains of the Italian colonization plan instituted by Austin Corbin about fifty years ago.

Now that I am a resident and a taxpayer of the City of New York, I chuckle to myself when I think that the first money I made in this countrycame from the budget of that imperial city. A most unusual procedure, I admit, to draw a salary check from the city presided over by Bartholdi's substantial goddess when I had seen that divinity for the first time only a few weeks before. But I had come on a lark, had balked at the idea of returning to Italy at least until I had breathed deep enough of that spirit of the New World which was later to pursue me

through the dusty halls of the Louvre and the blood-stained glaciers of the Italian front, and the goldbelt which my father had fastened around my waist when I left the banks of the Arno, wherein flows more poetry than water, was becoming ominously light. Something must be done; and when I appeared, smiling and apparently unconcerned, before the Jupiter-like countenance and the forbidding frown of the late Dr. Leipziger, Superintendent of Lectures for the Board of Education of the City of New York, and told him that I bad observed too many of my countrymen in the streets of Little Italy and wished to persuade some of them through the city lecture system to move away from the metropolis, the roar with which he received my suggestion would have delighted the heart of a Herr Hagenbeck, though his lions had not yet gone into *Ersatz-Wurst* for famished Germans. However, my few days in New York had taught me the value of bluff in a business transaction.

"All right, Dr. Leipziger," I said. "Perhaps it is just as well. My idea was too unusual for you, and board of education work pays altogether too little, anyway." But when I made for the door, the arm of his secretary stopped me, and at that moment I knew that the battle was won.

"Italian Immigration: where It Goes and where It should Go"—seventeen times did I give that lecture for the city in the schools and libraries of those Italian districts which successfully secrete themselves and their hundreds of thousands of denizens in the least conspicuous, and yet most accessible, corners of the great city. What unforgetable audiences! Tired street-diggers: tonsorial artists looking down over their noses at pomaded mustachios; runty little Sardinians with restless eyes like those of some good wild creature of the woods; Genoese sailor giants; children in cheap Mulberry Street dresses, embellished with hand-embroidered trimmings, gazing admiringly with eyes like Julius Cæsar's own at their hat-bands,

with "Freedom" or "Democracy" stamped upon them; and anxious mothers not yet introduced to the mysteries of American hair-nets, presiding over large broods and distributing among their young, according to their ages, advice, slaps, and nourishment. And before all that poverty and primitiveness and love and ignorance of the land that would be their children's *paese* I spread the vision of the unexplored and unsuspected possibilities of the New World; I spoke of health, prosperity, happiness, freedom, opportunity, to be had if they would only return to the mother earth on whose bounty they used to live, away from crowded tenements and pestilential city streets. Would they have the courage? Would they dare leave the costly "protection" of their only American friends, Mike the "barkeep" and Mr. Pinkus the landlord? Why, of course they would. And their new neighbors would not be likely to interfere with them provided they took up land which no "native son" wanted, and grew for the market something which no earlier immigrant had grown, and kept away from towns, demanding nothing and expecting nothing until their deeds should overcome the deep racial prejudice of rural communities. I said:

"You are unsuccessful and unhappy here. You cannot compete in business with the Jew, while your ignorance of English puts you at a disadvantage with the Irishman. Get away from such competition, and let us see whether your strong arms will not bring abundant riches out of the soil. Make up your minds at once to go, and the next time you are working upon the railroad in some friendly climate, or toiling in a factory away from large cities, inquire as to the price of the nearest abandoned farm, or ask for a figure on a stony or hilly tract given up as hopeless by the local farmers. You are born of a race of pioneers, which lacked opportunities in Europe, and fails to find them even here when in cities crowded with craftier peoples, but thrives when facing the obstacles of nature.

And be sure to strike out for yourselves. Do not go blindfold to any farm you have not seen, following some wild scheme of extensive colonization. But even if you should be lured into that, and fail, do not settle down to your fate without a fight, you countrymen of Columbus the undaunted. Remember the story of Tontitown, and you will not lose heart."

And then, before eager eyes which stared with snake-like intensity and childlike innocence, while the Irish school janitor was fidgeting toward the door, with an eye on his watch, and the "Italian inspector" of the board of education was perusing the suburban timetable to see which train he would be likely to catch for the Rockaways or White Plains, the story of Sunnyside and Tontitown, the romance of the Mississippi River colonization scheme, was depicted in a few simple sentences to those scions of an old race, always eager to appreciate the esthetic value of victory in an unequal fight.

In the latter half of the last century a New York financier, Austin Corbin, conceived the idea of embarking upon a momentous scheme of Italian colonization in the southern part of the United States. Large tracts of cotton-land along the lower Mississippi were purchased, and an arrangement was made with the mayor of Rome to send a certain number of Italian families every year from different parts of the peninsula as settlers for the new colony, which was to be named Sunnyside. A large number of families left their native shores, and in due time reached the distant spot.

Mr. Corbin had undertaken the matter in a charitable and philanthropic spirit. He had in view, above all, the happiness and success of the Italians, and to his Wall Street mind the idea of a large and self-supporting colony seemed to present mainly a problem in organization: so many members of each trade, so many hours of work per day, such and such transportation facilities throughout

the colony; in due time schools, a library, recreation centers, etc. He failed to see that Italians, being born individualists, cannot be reckoned with as numbered human units, and that the matter of quality requires as much consideration in dealing with them as that of quantity. Although they, were all farmers, the Venetians and the Calabrians were accustomed to different crops and to different methods of cultivation, while the tools provided for all were utterly different from those with which they were familiar. Cotton, the main crop to be raised by the colony, does not grow in Italy, and the Italian peasant, accustomed to grow what he consumes and to consume what he grows, grumbled at the idea of raising a crop which the problematic river boat carried away, bringing in return strange food-stuffs from elsewhere. Furthermore, the idea of culling Italians from all parts of the country was excellent in theory, but did not work in practice, because Italians from different regions can be made to do team work only by a strong, tactful, experienced authority, and the American overseers were unable to comprehend and smooth over the many misunderstandings and the historical jealousies behind the local feuds of their wards.

In the midst of it all Austin Corbin died. The heirs of a rich man have usually cares and interests hardly germane to the idea of a semi-philanthropic colonization scheme somewhere between St. Louis and New Orleans, and upon the local overseers was shifted the bulk of responsibility and of management. The large sums of money required to tide matters over until the colony could support itself became more and more difficult to obtain from the Corbin estate. On top of it all, an epidemic started. It was a tropical disease, unknown to the Italians, who became panic-stricken and stampeded. But there was nowhere to go. The swamps and forests extending for miles and miles on all sides drove back the settlers,

who, disheartened and sullen, refused to work on the unfriendly crops. Then Nature, whose speed is lightning in Southern regions, reasserted herself: the reclaimed part of the colony became once more what most of the lower Mississippi lands are, an ideal breeding place for malarial mosquitos. Malarial fever spread its dread wings over the colony; quinine was not to be had. Almost all the children died. The adults took this as an evil omen, and resigned themselves to their fate. They would all die in Sunnyside, and in a few years the Southern forest, by concealing even the traces of the tragedy enacted there, would enjoy a sweet revenge over men who had tried to curb it.

It is easy for us to say that they were not in Death Valley and might try to return home. They were not like the experienced Italian itinerant laborers whom one meets now in every country of the globe. They were penniless and illiterate peasants, transported bodily under contract of labor from an Italian *podere* to a southern Arkansas plantation. Their helplessness was that of children. There were no large manufacturing towns within hundreds of miles where the still able-bodied might have found some kind of work. The few near-by plantations had their full complement of negro workers, and ignorance and suspicion of any kind of foreigners kept out, by force if need be, the few Italians who strayed there in search of a livelihood. The overseers had left the colony, probably because threatened by the exasperated settlers. Italy was five thousand miles away. The colonists could speak no English, and had no friends or relatives in America.

But the few survivors who could read and write decided to try to communicate with the official representatives of their country, and explained their plight in letters addressed to the Italian consuls of some American cities whose names they had happened to hear. A few of these

letters reached their destinations, but it is hardly likely that they could have conveyed to the imagination of those receiving them an adequate picture of the situation in Sunnyside. "This place is not within my jurisdiction"; "Those poor wretches are having the blues in their new homes so far from Italy"; "I suppose their next letter will ask me for wholesale. repatriation at four hundred dollars per capita"—thus such an appeal would be likely to react on an official mind.

But an incredible thing happened. An Italian priest living in comfortable and metropolitan New York, with that intuitive sense of the presence of real danger and of real sorrow that is probably the outcome of constant experience in the confessional, read between the lines of the appeal, and started at once for Sunnyside.

One can well imagine what Father Bandini, the good Tuscan priest of fighting stock who could not resist the vague appeal, must have felt as he made his way between the festoons of Spanish moss common in that part of the South toward the colony, by this time almost entirely isolated and virtually stripped of all its women and children. He saw at a glance the physical and moral impossibility of reclaiming the land, and of giving the colony a new lease of life under different management. The survivors must leave at once that living tomb.

But how? Father Bandini himself had no money, having spent most of his scant savings in reaching the colony, and his new flock numbered more than one hundred, most of them in bad health and without ambition. Traveling by train or boat costs money, aside from the fact that neither means of transportation was near. So he resorted to a measure which is sure to achieve success among primitive Italians, whose mentality has not been over-modernized by the evolutionary processes of society: he struck the heroic chord dormant in each of them.

"My children," he said, "I have come to you from a city

which, although in America, is pretty nearly as far from here as it is from our dear mother-land. I have promised to God that I would save you, and save you I will. Where is the coward who will balk at the difficulties? Where is the materialist who will whimper if we must go without food now and then or sleep, as our ancestors did, under the starry heavens! You are my flock, and I, your God-given shepherd, will lead you into the sheepfold. Follow me at once!"

They consented. He struck through the woods without knowing exactly his aim, but persevering in the difficult task of maintaining the same direction, which took them farther and farther away from the malarial region close to the river, and brought them appreciably nearer to the hills of central Arkansas.

Winter came, with all its horrors; but, like the Mormons halting at Nauvoo, these men were supported by hopes and dreams as they tried to shelter themselves in the forest. They made traps and caught rabbits and other animals, thus keeping soul and body together. Many an Italian has lived on ten per cent of reality and ninety per cent of hope. When spring came, berries and herbs were added to their fare. The healthiest of the men found temporary employment in helping build the branch of a minor railroad. They saved every penny of their wages; the community now had some cash.

In the meantime Father Bandini, while sharing the dangers and discomforts of his men, was keeping in touch with the outside world. To be more specific, he was using what is probably the most generally known and respected uniform in existence, the cassock of the Catholic priest, which is in itself a note of personal introduction and before which all racial prejudice vanishes, to obtain a loan of money for his flock. He succeeded. It consisted of eight hundred dollars, to which the laboring portion of his men added the wages received for the rail-

road work. It was something; very little indeed in a city or village, but a nucleus on which to start life anew in a wild spot, away from all settlements. The spot was found in the heart of a virgin forest, healthful enough, but inaccessible; it was close to the place where Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma touch borders. One thousand dollars purchased a good many acres, nourishing food, medicines, and agricultural implements. The pioneers felled the trees, and made them into logs for their homes: they gathered together all the stones, and made them into a chapel for the home of their God who had guided them out of the wilderness. And the new settlement was called Tontitown, from a pioneer named Tonti, one of La Salle's lieutenants, who was the first known Italian to set foot in the State of Arkansas. Thus Father Bandini, with patriotism united to the proverbial Italian love for history, gave to his village a name which was an omen and a homage, instead of calling it after an insignificant hill or brook, or repeating some highsounding name from the epic days of Rome or Greece, which would make the place blush forever for the parallel.

No event worthy of note having taken place in Tontitown since that time, history took flight from there toward other shores. It is the old and well-known contrast, which makes moderate prosperity and moderate happiness, so dear to most humans in real life, unattractive to fiction; and judging from the absence of all records, I had reason to suppose that the story of Tontitown since it triumphed over the jungle could have been summed up in the proverbial sentence, "And they lived happily ever after."

How beautiful is America! Only a European who, weary of concentrated civilization, longs for corners of the globe inhabitable and yet uninhabited, can fully comprehend the joy of looking from morning till night out of the window of a well-heated, comfortable train, seeing

not old city walls and crumbling churches, but Nature, in her everchanging aspects, unrolling her wealth and her beauty before his eyes. Sometimes those panoramas have been widely advertised, and merely fulfil one's expectations; but more often they come as a surprise, and the journeying European turns almost in anger from his American fellow-traveler, who, failing to appreciate the loveliness of his own country, observes the landscape only when it presents to view a recently built bridge, a gingerbread farm-house, or some other object bespeaking the efforts made by the hand of man to set aside the handiwork of God.

I felt this more strongly and more often than ever before, when, having been sent by the Italian military authorities to acquaint Americans with Italy's part in the war, I undertook a tour of the different state universities. From Illinois to Louisiana my itinerary covered serene and picturesque university towns, which presented to me, a hustling officer now bent on war propaganda, the alluring picture of a leisurely life among books, surrounded by the open book of Nature.

I shall never forget my arrival at Fayetteville, in the beautiful Ozark Range, early one glorious morning in May. Out of the customary crowd of interested townsmen whom the lure of life, and of motion called to the station the arrival of the express, and who eyed sidewise, with the usual look of concerned curiosity, my exotic uniform, there came to meet me and to greet me in the name of the university, an Italian member of the faculty, a professor of Romance languages [Antonio Marinoni] whom I had known for years by fame, but, owing to the inaccessible location of the University of Arkansas, had despaired of ever knowing in person. He had been there for seventeen years, the only Italian in town except for his wife and, technically, perhaps, from the Italian point of view, his charming American born children. He gazed at

me eagerly and curiously as I spoke, as if at a rare zoölogical specimen.

"It is more than six years," he explained, "since I last talked with an Italian of your type; and, for that matter, one does not see any Italians whatever in Favetteville. A few Italian petty merchants live in Little Rock, more than one hundred miles from here. And I suppose I ought to mention the Italian-born Tontitown people, lost in the woods, 'way out in that direction."

Tontitown! Vaguely, as if he had sung a tune heard long, long ago, the meaning of it began to acquire shape; the memory of the days before the propaganda work, before the war, before my American professorship, filtered through my hazy brain. Why, of course, this was Arkansas, the State which had looked as vague and unreal as a South Sea island off the main route of travel when I first went to live in New York. And the word "Tontitown," so long forgotten—ah, that is the reason why I was startled, apparently without cause, when I saw in the hall of one of the largest business buildings in Chicago, among the busts of Mississippi River pioneers, that of a "Frenchman" named *Tonty!* I was in the domain of the Italian explorer who, *more Italico,* had added laurels to the crown of another land; in the very region where, in later days, an Italian religious *condotticro* had rescued his people from defeat, and brought them to contentment and success.

"How far is Tontitown from here?"

"The distance is not great, less than twenty miles, I should say. But the branch railroad which connected it with civilization was closed years ago, when the company failed, and the wagon-road is in an impossible state. You are as likely as not to get stuck deep in the mud or to wreck the car."

But an hour later we were on our way. There were farms at first, then low underbush, a camp of American

Gipsies, local elements migrating with all their belongings to some boom town in near-by Oklahoma, prospectors at work, wild game not over-concerned with our noisy presence, swift streams crossing roads in which our wheels sank to the hub, then wilderness. Not a wagon or truck of any kind, or, for that matter, any other evidence of traffic, did we meet. My friend explained that Tontitown was a self-supporting community, which grew all it needed and went without what it could not grow, its people having followed the natural instinct of the Italian peasant to raise a little of everything on his own farm, so as not to need any cash. It was an attitude made more reasonable by the sad lesson of the Sunnyside cotton venture, by the difficulties of communication, and by the jealousy of their nearest neighbors, who would do no business with these "invaders," who were foreigners into the bargain.

After miles and miles of the wooded wilderness through which the road advanced in zigzag formation, avoiding the more massive trees, we began to see again the vivid sunlight. The horizon seemed to widen, and the trees to be farther apart; and just as the driver announced that we were nearing our destination, a strange sound greeted my ears, and an unforgetable sight presented itself to my eyes.

The whole population of Tontitown, warned by telephone, had quit work and come to greet the Italian officer at the frontier of their realm. At the head of the solid mass of bearded settlers and of children in their Sunday best stood three elderly men, one gray and bent, with an old-fashioned Italian army drum, on which he revived the regulation salute, with the frills of *virtuositá* learned in the service in Italy when the body was much younger and his heart just as young; and on each side an old, but hale, settler bearing a flag, one a kind of Italian tricolor minus the coat-of-arms, and with the stripes disposed horizontally instead

of vertically, and the other with the stripes arranged properly, but with the central space occupied by a strange cross in no sense related to that of Savoy, and surrounded by beautifully embroidered bunches of fanciful leaves. I alighted: one does not enter any such village in a cheap car.

I shook many rough hands, and returned the stiff salute of the few ex-soldiers; but no words were exchanged. In fact, there was nothing to be said. To them, this officer from home who had broken the long silence and oblivion was nothing short of a miraculous apparition; to me, that old drum and drummer, those flags so laboriously made from memory or possibly even *from descriptions* (since very few Italian flags could be seen in the Italian country-side before the beginning of this century), meant a sublime example of patriotic endeavor, a pride in the rise from the Italy which was, to that which is now, and a pledge of undying loyalty in the face of what must have appeared to them as the last measure of their country's indifference and oblivion.

We proceeded toward the village. Right and left of me was Italy; the houses were built tight and compact, with green shutters and red roofs. A crooked path, a coquettish pergola, a row of old kitchen jars made into flowerpots, proclaimed the *italianitá* of a place where drab and grubby existence was not considered to be an unavoidable element of farming life. The merry festoons of the vine, running from tree to tree and from end to end of the farms reminded me of happy days of bare-footed intimacy with the children of the *contadino*, pursuing a multitude of many-hued butterflies and dreams.

"Is it possible," I asked, breaking a silence which was becoming oppressive, "that these trees which support the vines are actually Italian *pioppi?* I have never seen them in America before."

"Yes, Signor Tenente. We imported everything: seeds, trees, plows, tool of all kinds. Father Bandini,

buonanima[1], brought them with him from Italy shortly before he died. The eggs of all kinds of creatures came with them, an now we have even our own Italian crickets and Italian locusts."

He spoke with a strong Southern accent, but in remarkably pure Italian; and so did the next man with whom I talked. Yet they were both plain, uneducated peasants. I concluded that the same process had taken place here which I had noticed in the war zone among Italian military units consisting of soldiers from different regions. Venetians and Sicilians, Romans and Piedmontese, being unable to impose any one of their dialects on the others, compromise on a common speech, which is the result of mutual yielding. This common speech is *the Italian language.* Dante discovered the fact six centuries ago, and, after proving it conclusively in his "De Vulgari Eloquentia," advertised it in no less a work than the "Divina Commedia."

Where were they taking me? To some town hall or civic center? A fine, deep-toned bell began to peal near by, with the swing and majesty of an Italian church bell. A few seconds later we were inside a beautifully kept, capacious, and tastefully decorated church. Instinctively, my eyes turned to the flags; for in Italy the tricolor is not welcomed in the house of God, as I well knew because of the ruses we students devised in order to introduce it every year into the national mausoleum of Santa Croce on the anniversary of the Battle of Curtatone, where much student blood was shed. But in this distant corner of Italy, church and state did not quarrel; the behavior of the standard-bearers as they entered showed no uncertainty, no hesitation.

The crowd had divided itself, Italian fashion, the few

[1] No peasant from central Italy would dare mention the name of any one of the departed personally known to him without adding *buonanima*—"good soul."

women kneeling on the benches, the men crowding by the door. A neatly dressed, middle-aged Italian approached me as I faced the altar, and said:

"I am the Mayor of Tontitown; but my work was already mapped out when I took office. The real mayor here was Father Bandini. This church is his handiwork. It is the third of our churches. The first two were burned down at night by villagers of the nearest towns, who wanted no Italians and no Catholics about. We are Italians and Catholics, thank God! and we shall have our own church and worship in our own way."

There was something of the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers or of the Huguenots in the determined statement of that plain man. Where else does one find to-day such spontaneously religious and patriotic spirit pervading a settlement of European immigrants? They talk political economy nowadays, and living wages and class organization.

And America is confident that her traditional ideals are upheld, since no European can land who has not filled out a blank in which he assures the Washington authorities that he believes in God. But these men indulged in no lip service to indifferent creeds. They had cried out in their sorrow for some one to help them, and when financiers and officials had been reluctant or deaf, a priest had lent a hand. That explains why I had not even been asked whether I wanted to visit their church; they had taken me there as a matter of course. The "formal reception" to the stranger beyond the seas, such as it was, was held there, in the home of their God, instead of in the usual town hall, clubhouse, or armory—homes of politics of wealth, or of force. Indeed, beyond the authority of the church, to what authority were these people subjected? The power of the United States Government could on occasion penetrate this village, where mayor, post-master, constable, in short everybody in office, was a local Italian element, but would have no

excuse for continued interference with local affairs unless a disturbing situation required this artificial arrangement. On the other hand, these people, although Italian in nationality and mainly in citizenship, are far out of reach of Italian officialdom, living hundreds and hundreds of miles from the nearest Italian consuls, whose functions, indeed, being purely commercial and statistical, do not include guardianship of, and authority over, strange Italian settlements in the wilderness. But where no political arm could reach, the religious arm did. The Catholic Church, even after the death of their leader-priest, had every facility for reaching and ruling them, for it is the one among all forms of associated mankind which has settled to perfection the problem of organization and the proportion between local autonomy and centralization of efforts.

A priest came forward to welcome me; he was an Italian-speaking Pole, I think, in temporary charge of the parish. He led me to the sacristy, where hung a life-size portrait of Father Bandini, a genial soul, with sunny and sympathetic features, who must have ruled by love alone; and where I was shown the rich church vestments, with the Italian royal arms embroidered upon them, which the dowager Queen Margherita presented to the church when the miracle of the Sunnyside καταβασις became known. On the opposite wall a large American flag was draped around a signed photograph of Queen Margherita. In the parochial school, which we entered next, American and Italian nuns were teaching the three R's in both languages to an army of children, which spoke well for the recuperative powers of the race; because very few women from the Sunnyside settlement were living when Tontitown was founded, and none had been recruited from the outside world since that day.

The children insisted that I should speak to them, and their request was easily granted. But when the grownups

also clamored for a talk, and we had made sure that no class-room could accommodate even a decent proportion of the prospective audience, we adjourned to the village hall, marching thither, flags *en tête.*

"Tell us all that has happened since we left Italy." "Is it true that my native town, which was in Austria, will soon be a part of Italy?" "Tell us about Tripoli. We heard something about Tripoli some years ago, but neither the Little Rock nor the Oklahoma City papers explained clearly. Where is Tripoli?"

Now, the Tripolitan expedition was the first successful colonial undertaking of Italy. which meant to that country vastly more than the conquest and possession of the contiguous regions of Tunis and Egypt mean to France and Great Britain, because it tested her military and colonizing powers. All Italy had gone wild over the acquisition from Turkey of those vast barren stretches of sand, with a few oases full of dates and of Roman relics. And here were these hundreds of Italians wondering what and where Tripoli was, because the Little Rock and Oklahoma City papers did not explain clearly.

It is not my purpose to repeat here my simple, sincere, heart-felt talk, in which I spoke of a small and oppressed and aristocratic Italy that was, of larger and free and democratic Italy recently made and still in the making; of Austria, which we were about to destroy; of Germany, which America and Italy were fighting together. The old pioneers, standing or sitting on rude benches, were lost to the world in amazed contemplation; one could almost hear their hearts beating with unaccustomed rapidity. And my memory went back many years to the comfortable auditoriums of the New York schools where people of the same blood had listened with rapture to another Italian epic, smaller, but not less poignant—that of these survivors of Sunnyside.

When I finished, amid the shouts of the easily pleased

crowd, and moved to come down from the platform, I stumbled over something. It was a group of wooden marionettes! That hall was the place of public entertainment, and these Americans of Italian blood, who had lived out of touch with the rest of the American world, could not think of entertainment otherwise than in terms of our peasants in Italy. No, not the pranks of Charlie Chaplin for them, or an expurgated edition of the dubious customs and costumes of our day as Universal City presents them to vast audiences of kitchenette housewives, who camp through life in order to enjoy every afternoon Fatty Arbuckle, or, to shudder over "The Knickerbocker Buckaroo." They had *Rosaura* here, of wholesome Goldoni fame, as she filled the *campielli* of Venice with her twittered *bons mots*; and *Pulcinella*, the facile Neapolitan; *Stenterello*, the timorous and salacious Florentine; *Arlecchino, Brighella, Doctor Balanzon*—all the time-honored types and caricatures, all the characters, fundamentally true or simply plausible to the student of human nature, in which live and are handed down from one audience to another, young or merely mentally un-sophisticated, the history and romance of a historical and romantic land.

Incredible, but true, a villager presented me with a souvenir picture post-card of the church. How far must one recede from civilization to reach a place where no lustrous, highly colored, made-in-Germany post-card exists, with its poison-green trees and Prussian-blue skies? And when the Italian postmaster, requested for a stamp, handed me the usual crimson portrait of George Washington [2¢ U.S. postage of the day], I felt it an incongruity; nor could I persuade myself that foreign postage would be required to send the post-card to my people in Italy.

Were these people Italians? Yes, unquestionably. And yet, was this Italy? Apparently, yes; actually, a thousand times no. This was a hothouse Italy, formed of patience and love, like certain convent-made embroideries repro-

ducing famous altar-pieces. As an imitation it was perfect; yet every inch of it was artificial. I never saw as plainly as I did then and there, in the heart of that apparently most Italian region, what a terrific blow the New World has dealt to the old Roman conception of authority embodied in the *jus sanguinis*—the law which gives to the offspring, no matter where born, the citizenship of the father, as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon conception of the *jus loci*, the law which proclaims the all-powerful influence of residence and environment. This colony was, from the point of view of Italian civilization, an obvious case of arrested development; and yet man grows, learns, proceeds on the road of civilized improvement and transformation; *and every new element here must necessarily be either American or spontaneous, but not Italian*, since the Italy of these people is the Italy of almost two generations ago. To give but one example, the man who told me, in Italian, that they had been warned of my arrival by telephone, did not use the Italian word *feléfono*, but the English word "telephone," for the simple reason that no telephone had been installed in Italy when the last complement of emigrants had left the country for Sunnyside, and no Italian word could exist in the Tontitown vocabulary which did not exist in Italy on that day. For all their *italianità*, the political habitat of these people was surely not Italy, which could hardly with any degree of justice accuse of desertion these colonists because they had not returned to fight in a Tripoli war whose very reality had been nebulous in their minds utitil my arrival. It might be objected that these people are not Americans, either; and if American means seceding English, as the most conservative element in the United States still maintains, I admit that they are not. But at least there are two bonds connecting them with other Americans: the pioneer spirit of a "Bula Matari," or Breaker of Rocks, if one may quote from Stanley's tomb, and the passionate love of that portion of soil—that

unquestionably American soil—which their labors reclaimed from the wilderness. Let international lawyers wrangle over Tontitown's real status; I, for one, consider it neither a strictly American town nor an Italian colony, but the most amazing modern replica of a medieval republic; of one of those. free and proud cities, battlemented and turreted, self-contained and self-sufficient, ceaselessly glorying in their Italian civilization, yet with no visible common bond with other fragments of Italian mentality and culture situated elsewhere on our planet.

Although time prevented my accepting an invitation to lunch, I consented to take with me a few odds and ends to be eaten in the car while returning to Fayetteville, and I found myself loaded down with the most Italian-looking cakes I had ever beheld on this side of the ocean; with soft sheep's-milk cheese made in the approved Lombard and Tuscan manner, sunned on green fern leaves, of which it had kept the lacy design; with fruit dried in the Southern Italian style cut open, filled with almonds and wild fennel, then closed again, and flattened out to dry in the sun on wicker trays around which hovers the music of eager wasps and ever-hungry bees.

It was a pity to sadden the hearts of the happy donors, who continued coming to me with gifts better proportioned to their generosity than to my limited needs; but, the afternoon being well advanced, I felt that I could no longer postpone broaching a painful subject, which the Italian custom of never mentioning to a guest anything connected with sorrow had prevented my hosts from suggesting.

"May I see the last resting-place of Father Bandini?"

Buoyancy of spirit changed to somber silence as we wound our way toward the hallowed spot. "He was the first to be laid to sleep in the Tontitown cemetery," said someone. "We made a regular cemetery around his grave," expiained another. What a picture these words brought to my memory, of lone tombstones I had seen all

over the vast young land from the Mississippi to the Great Divide, each departed one being laid to rest in the most picturesque spot of his remote farm, under an old and friendly tree

> . . . that may in summer wear
> A nest of robins in her hair;
> Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
> Who intimately lives with rain!

But Father Bandini had no family except his flock; he had no farm except his parish. So they must have started for him and in his honor the village cemetery, a rudely inclosed space with the underbrush removed, the natural caprices of the infrequent trees subdued and curbed somewhat by the gardener's hand.

I feared a pretentious monument, a flowery inscription; but no. On a flat stone in the place of honor I read, "FATHER BANDINI-FOUNDER OF TONTI-TOWN." A bunch of the most Italian flowers, placed there several days before, was slowly dying upon it, pasting its petals upon the stone, which moss was just beginning to freckle; and the dry stalks of the golden rod of the land of the good father's adoption was bending over from every side, prompted,—who knows?—perhaps by curiosity, perhaps by a desire to do honor, perhaps by gratitude because the remains of his poor mortal frame had made its growth so luxuriant.

"We shall go away quietly, without passing again through the center of the village, if at all possible," I said to my guide. But the colonists must have divined my thought, for they had followed me to the cemetery. And they were all crowding around the automobile, silently expecting the unavoidable.

I tried to smile; so did they. My last glimpse, as the machine sped toward the woods which had acted so successfully as a Chinese Wall for the settlement, was of ten or twelve old hands—hands which had cleared the unnamed

wilderness years and years before—turned toward me, palms out, as those of defenseless people pleading for mercy. And I never felt so helpless as before that heartrending helplessness. How we do pay for all our joys! I might, in the whirlwind of my new existence, forget some day that amazing interlude; not they. As the car bumped along from rock to rock under the gloom of the primitive forest, I knew that to the survivors of the Sunnyside tragedy those trees must henceforth appear a little higher, that road a little more impassable, their beloved Father Bandini sunk a little deeper in the cold earth of that Tontitown, which they cannot love as a mother, but as their own begotten daughter, while they turn with filial love toward the distant *patria* out of reach, out of hearing, out of all understanding of the passionate homesickness of these heroic, but unwilling, pioneers, shanghaied long ago upon the ship of destiny, and landed by a Godgiven helmsman on the forgotten isle of Tontitown. ❖

QUERY— *Dee Ferguson Sutton, 1349 Lisbon Avenue, W. Sacramento, CA. 95605, phone (916) 371-3985* is seeking information on her great ancestor and his family after his move to Washington County from Missouri after the Civil War. His name was THOMAS ROBERT FERGUSON and wife, ELIZA JANE MAY. Need death dates on them. Their children were NANCY who wed MR. PURDY; CATHERINE who wed MR. MUSE; ANNA ELIZABETH who married JOHN HENRY DANNENBERG (which I have gotten some info on—including enrollment records into the Cherokee Nation); WALLER who wed ALICE SANDERS (Alcey Saunders); GEORGE who wed ANNIE PATTERSON (whose enrollment records I also have); and JAMES SEQUOYAH who married ELLEN HISE. James and Ellen were her great grandparents and they both died in Texas from typhoid. ❖

Passing the Bar

[While working on the article about Captain Charles L. von Berg (see *Flashback*, Vol. 50, No. 1, February 2000), I came across this story in *Indian Scout—Western Painter, Captain Charles L. von Berg*, by Paul K. Heerwagen. Heerwagen was told this story by John Mayes himself. Mayes was a brother-in-law of von Berg's. —*the editor*]

From page 104 of Heerwagen's book:

"John Mayes, Aunt Lou's younger brother was a frequent visitor at the ranch, 'a-come-Saturday.' He was teaching at Ribbon Ridge School House. His sister was mighty proud of her brother for he was studying law 'of-a-nights'. A lawyer friend in Fayetteville was lending him the law books. Captain von Berg commented. 'John, that's the way Abe Lincoln did.' "

From pages 106-108:

"The von Bergs had just moved into their new home [on East Mountain in Fayetteville].

"Aunt Lou was 'stewing,' it being Saturday and her brother, John, had not been up to visit them.

"She kept going to the window, watching for him. About dusk she recognized her brother starting up the mountain.

"John arrived out of breath and terribly excited.

"His sister and the Captain were quite solicitous.

" 'Wait 'till I get my hat off,' he Joshed, 'and I'll tell you. I came in early this morning to return some law books and get others. My lawyer teacher jumped me about taking the bar examination. Said that the bar was meeting this morning.'

" 'I told him I didn't feel that I was quite ready to take the examination.

" 'Well, come on,' he urged, 'we'll go up on the square to the Court House and it will give you some experience as to what you can expect on examinations.'

"I asked him if taking this examination and failing it might count against me when I came up the second time.

" 'No, it won't,' he assured me.

"Was I scared. There were judges and lawyers facing me, six of 'em, all distinguished men. I felt like I imagine how our old sow felt when she got caught under the garden gate.

"One of the members of the bar popped the first question to me.

"I studied it short while and then gave my answer.

" "Wrong," exclaimed one of the lawyers.

" "He's absolutely right,' proclaimed one of the judges.

"The other four spoke out, in turn, two of them said I was wrong and two said I was right.

"Well, they argued and argued between themselves until they got hungry and we quit for dinnah.

"After dinnah they went at it again and their arguments continued until late afternoon. All I did was just sit there and listen.

"Finally one of the members of the bar said, 'Gentlemen, it's getting late; I have to get home and milk my cow.'

"So they agreed to stop.

"Then one of the attorneys asked, 'What about this young man?'

"I felt I already knew about this young man. I would be reprimanded and told not to come back until I had learned my lessons.

"Another spoke up, 'Anyone,' and he repeated, 'anyone, who can propound an answer that has taken us all day to try and decide whether he was right should be admitted to our bar.'

"The other five fell right in with him. The next thing I knew they were shaking my hand as a new member of the Washington County Bar.

" 'Lawyer Mayes is moving to Fayetteville, Martha,' he

joyously added."

[The following brief biographical sketch of John Mayes was published in the Bulletin Series of the Washington County Historical Society titled, *Bench and Bar of Washington County, Arkansas, 1828-1961*, by Oscar E. Williams, 1961.]

"John Mayes was born in Washington County, Arkansas, August 28, 1875, and spent his entire life in this community, passing to his reward on April 7, 1945. His education was obtained in the public schools of Washington County and in the Academy at Rogers, Arkansas, from which institution he was graduated in 1898. He taught school thereafter for several years, during which time he was studying law as he had opportunity and spare time from his teaching duties. He was admitted to the bar for general practice of law in the local courts in 1904 and later was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Arkansas, and in the United States District Courts. He was chosen by vote of the people of Washington County as a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention in 1917." ❖

Campgrounds For Bethlehem Church
And Towns That Followed

by Bob Keen

The Bethlehem M.E. Church started the first campgrounds in Washington County Arkansas, but it was known by several names. The original name was Mountain Springs Methodist Campgrounds; most people today know it as Salem Springs. It was built as a small trading post and mission field for the Indians and it is thought that Reverend John Harrell was most instrumental in starting this campground. The campgrounds grew up around the spring on three acres of land owned by

the Federal Government. I do not know the exact year that it was started; however, the first Methodist Conference was held there in 1833. The meeting was called to order by Joshua Soule who was the first Methodist Bishop to come to Arkansas. There were several Methodist ministers living in the area—Reverend Jacob Sexton, Reverend George Webber, Reverend Thomas Tennant, Reverend John Harrell, and Reverend David B. Cummings. Rev. Harrell and Rev. Cummings were devout missionaries to the Indians.

In the 1840s settlers started coming into the area surrounding Salem Springs. Thomas Douthit homesteaded southeast of the spring and opened the first general store. The first post office was establishied in 1882 and the first postmaster was William M. Goddard. Russel Bates came to the area and erected a large two-story hotel, which he he later sold to Benjiman Fields; then he moved and built a large house that is known today as the Pitts House. The Choate family came in 1850, and some of their descendants still live on the original homestead to this day, including this author's sister-in-law, Carolyn Choate Keen. There were at least two doctors who lived and practiced in the area, Doctor Ridley and Doctor Plumblee. Doctor Ridley built a drug store in 1937. Peter Luginbuel came from Germany in 1850 and settled in Salem Springs. His descendants started the Luginbuel Funeral Homes in Lincoln and Prairie Grove. Thomas Walls operated a grist mill.

William Sexton in 1950 platted the town and sold lots. He also named the first post office after his father Reverend Jacob Sexton. It was called Sexton and was in operation from 1882 to 1905. Benjiman Fields was the last postmaster. Mr. Malloy was killed by bushwackers and buried by Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Armstrong. At one time there was at least fourteen places of business—general stores, sawmill, grist mill, livery stable, hotel, barber-

shop, blacksmith shop, and a bank. J. P. Payne was justice of the peace. After the coming of the Kansas City Southern Railroad to Westville, Okla., all the businesses in Salem faded away, leaving only the original campgrounds and the spring.

I remember as a boy going on a church picnic to the Salem campgrounds. There were several big trees with tires hanging on ropes to swing on, a couple of wooden picnic tables: today the only thing left is one tree in the fork of the road. The Methodist archives is planning to erect a historical marker to the old Mountain Springs Methodist Campgrounds. Part of this information was taken from an article written by Conrad Russell in 1976. ❖

Alcuin "Al" Eason, Jr.

1999 Distinguished Citizen of Washington County

The Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award was presented to Alcuin "Al" Eason, Jr. at the last annual meeting of the Washington County Historical Society. Al is a second generation to have received the award; the award was previously presented to his father "Cap" as he was affectionately referred to by Fayetteville citizens who knew him as captain of the Razorback football team at the University. Al, a native of Washington County, attended schools in Fayetteville, graduating from Fayetteville High School in 1942 at the age of 16. He entered the University of Arkansas as a physics major, and in 1944 he joined the United States Navy serving in the Pacific Area. At the end of World War II he returned to the University of Arkansas entering the College of Business Administration in 1946. The Daughters of the

Al Eason, Jr.

Confederacy presented him a patriotic medal in 1948.

After graduation he entered the insurance business with his father, which was established in 1888 by his grand father J. T. Eason, who moved to Arkansas from Mississippi. Al at the time of his retirement was president of The First Federal Savings and Loan of Fayetteville, and was known throughout Arkansas for his leadership rolls in the insurance and savings and loan professions.

Al has also been a progressive leader in the growth of Fayetteville with an eye on preserving the historic values of the community. He was active in securing the building of the Fayetteville Hilton Hotel and adjoining Continuing Education Building. With urban renewal he has worked to preserve historical structures on the Fayetteville square, and vicinity. Of major interest to Al has been preserving Evergreen Cemetery, which was established many years before the Civil War and is the resting place of many early settlers and notables such as Archibald Yell, Sophia Sawyer, and Senator J. William Fulbright.

We salute Al, and wish him and his wife Marilyn, many happy and healthful years in their retirement. ❖

1885 *Fayetteville Democrat* — Dr. Kelton Shot

From the *Fayetteville Democrat* 22 Oct 1885: "On Sunday our community was startled by the information, by telegraph, that Dr. Kelton had been shot and instantly killed by his nephew Jo VanMeter. The first statement was that the killing was wholly justifiable. Under present advisement this does not appear to be entirely true and grave doubts are now entertained as to whether the killing was in any sense justifiable or even excusable. The coroner's jury returned a verdict that the deceased came to his death from a pistol shot and that said pistol was in the hands of Jo VanMeter. The slayer having made his escape and being still at large a warrant was issued for

his arrest. We understand that the evidence before the coroner was conflicting. The statement of Jo VanMeter's wife and one James Forest goes to show that Dr. Kelton went to the house of VanMeter on Sunday afternoon; that he (Kelton) was armed and considerabley the worse for liquor; that Kelton swore that he would kill the whole family and the he snapped his pistol at Jo VanMeter and also at Mrs. VanMeter, but without any effect, that thereupon Jo VanMeter fired at Kelton, shooting him through the heart—but one shot fired. Also, that after Kelton snapped his pistol at VanMeter he struck Forest with it—over the head—and then snapped it at Mrs. VanMeter. A little son of Dr. Kelton, some 12 years of age, was examined. He stated that his father was first knifed by Forest and then shot by VanMeter and that when VanMeter shot his father he was unarmed, having been disabled in his pistol arm—the left—by the knife thrust. This evidence is substantiated by the fact that Kelton's arm was but precisely as described, being a fact wholly unexplained by the evidence of Mrs. VanMeter or young Forest. A warrant has been issued for young Forest and the end is not yet. The friends of the deceased demand a full investigation, claiming that the facts will implicate both VanMeter and Forest. Further developments are awaited anxiously. LATER: James Forest has been arrested and in default of bail has been committed to jail as a witness to await the action of the grand jury. His evidence will be awaited with interest as it is suspected that he may conclude to tell a some what different story than the one told by him before the coroner and especially as to the cutting done before the shooting. As told by another witness."

Linda Sheehan, 139 Ebano Ct., Solana Beach, CA 92075 is hoping to obtain additional information on the incident described above. Jo VanMeter was the husband of her ggrandmother's sister Lydia. ❖

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Plan To Attend The 30th Annual Ice Cream Social August 19

The Washington County Historical Society will present an extravaganza calculated to entertain the entire family Saturday, August 19th from 4-7 p.m. This wonderful annual event is held at Headquarters House, 118 E. Dickson Street in Fayetteville.

Special entertainment includes Marshall Mitchell and his group of musicians who were so well received last year.

An auction of antique items such as home accessories, furniture, jewelry, personal fans, books, clothing—the gamut, will be conducted by Gary Cooper, the 1999 Arkansas auctioneer champion.

You can examine vintage cars belonging to members of the Ozark Antique Car Club, have your face painted by clowns from Arky Malarky, and have your palm read by Madam Lasagna.

Part of the fun is a stroll around the magnificent authentic Civil War gardens that are beautifully maintained by master gardners.

Living History costumed members will be on hand to relate stories of local events of yesteryear.

The stars of the show are the delicious cakes baked and donated by generous local people and complimented by Hiland Dairy's wonderful ice cream.

Admission is $5.00 for adults and $2.00 for children under 12. Proceeds help care for the three properties owned by the Society.

Should rain intrude, the social will be held in the covered parking lot of the Court House.

So do plan to attend, and if you own Civil War or 19th century clothing and wish to come costumed, feel free to do so.

SEE YOU THERE !!!!

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